

Community Board News



**BERNAL HEIGHTS
REFERENCE**

Bernal Heights/Alemany/Holly Court
Visitacion Valley/Geneva Towers/Sunnydale

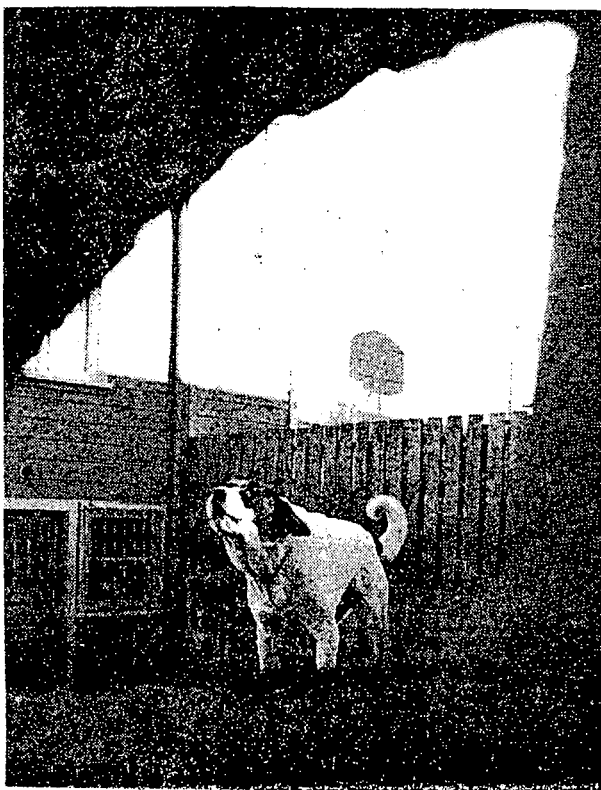
San Francisco

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Don't Suffer In Silence



Too Many Hassles On Your Block?

Barking dogs, vandalism, noisy neighbors—these and other problems confront many Visitacion Valley and Bernal Heights residents each day. But the hassles don't disappear unless something is done. If people are wary of their neighbors, are "afraid to talk," or hesitant about using legal or other social service agencies, they may suffer in silence for a long time.

Community Board panels in both neighborhoods provide a place to go for those who would otherwise be reluctant to speak out about their problems. Community Board staff also takes on cases that many city and community agencies wouldn't know how to deal with. As a result, people are ending their dismay through neighborhood panel hearings or by "talking it over" with CBP staff.

During the year, many Bernal Heights and Valley residents called Community Board of-

fices when there was nowhere else to turn. The City's legal, neighborhood and social service agencies also have referred cases to CBP panels. Many people cite Community Boards as the only program that helped them to successfully end their disputes.

Barking Dogs

Imagine, for example, a Valley resident whose neighbor's dog howled "all day and all night" for more than a year. The woman, reluctant to phone police or the SPCA, took the problem to All People's Coalition. From there, she was referred to Community Boards.

"I wanted the least amount of trouble with the best results—that's why I didn't phone police or the SPCA.

"The Community Board staff and I found that the dog's owners were willing to cooperate and attend a hearing, but he worked nights," she



Call Community Boards

said. The first hearing was cancelled because he had broken his leg. Undaunted, she and the CBP staff arranged another hearing. Several other neighbors, also kept awake by the dog's barking, also attended.

"We talked about the noise. He agreed to keep the dog quiet. And he has!"

More Dangerous Matter

Not all Community Board hearings deal with barking dogs and neighbor-to-neighbor squabbles. Some have even more threatening implications.

One Bernal Heights landlady was repeatedly and violently threatened by a tenant who roomed in her house.

"The man had quite a violent temper," she observed. "Nothing I did could convince him to leave. The police were powerless without

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1979 Panelist Search: Bernal, Valley Neighbors Wanted

As we go to press, Bernal Heights and Visitacion Valley residents are responding enthusiastically to Community Boards' search for new panelists. It was about one year ago that the first group of neighbors went through training and began solving problems in the two communities. Now, in response to newsletter articles, word-of-mouth, housemeetings and meetings with community organizations, other neighbors want to serve on panels. They are volunteering time to solve today's disputes and prevent tomorrow's. They are joining veteran panelists in the most unique neighborhood dispute resolution program in the country.

CBP Training

The Program plans to train 24 people from Bernal Heights and seven from Visitacion Valley. Training sessions begin Tuesday evening Nov. 28 and continue the next, three Saturdays and two Tuesdays. The last session is Saturday, Dec. 16.

To be a panelist, you must live in Bernal Heights or Visitacion Valley/Sunnydale, attend all training sessions and agree to serve one year. Panels usually meet three times per

month. All staff and panelists agree that community boards must reflect the age, racial and sexual diversity of the communities.

The very popular training program gives panelists an overview of how to resolve a wide variety of disputes. It also teaches the specific methods that must be used to make hearings run smoothly and effectively: How to ask questions, handle emotions and listen for underlying feelings, to name a few. As a trainee, much of your time is spent in "role-plays"—practicing on sample cases. These provide a chance for you to practice new skills, learn to work with others and gain confidence in your abilities as a panelist.

Panelist Interviews

If you read the September CBP newsletter's interviews with Visitacion Valley and Bernal Heights panelists, you may remember how pleased they were with the way they used their training in daily living and work activities. As one panelist summarized: "The training provided me with some valuable social skills."

Besides personal gains, you also will experience the satisfaction of helping to resolve

neighborhood disputes. After a successful hearing, both panelists and neighbors leave knowing that the problem is taken care of. Their neighborhood offers a place where differences can be handled informally, quickly, completely and in a neighborly way.

If you want to be a Community Board panelist, call the area office in your neighborhood.

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Housemeetings: Best Way To Let Friends Know About CBP

In a Geneva Terrace living room, people sit and talk about the neighborhood: "The houses around here get ripped off and there's nothing we can do."

Down the road, in a Sunnydale home, more than 20 people discuss the daily hassles of living in the projects. Some want direct confrontation with the City's housing authority. Others say there is too much noise.

Both scenes share one thing in common. They are Community Board housemeetings. People in each house have invited friends, neighbors, and CBP staff over to talk with them about local problems. They want to know how using Community Board panels can help alleviate some of the hassles. A few guests want to be panelists.

"In this neighborhood, you've got to build up trust before anything can catch," observes one participant.

"My friend's daughter sleeps with a .38 under her pillow," says another neighbor.

During the talks, CBP staff members explain how Community Boards work and the types of



One of the best ways to tell your friends and neighbors about Community Boards is to hold a housemeeting. In Bernal Heights and Visitacion Valley/Sunnydale, you can invite friends, neighbors and Community Board staff into your living room. We'll soon have a slide show and will answer any questions people have about the Program. It's a great way to learn more about being a panelist. You can also find out how cases are referred and hearings set up. For more information call your neighborhood CBP. Bernal Heights: 285-4688; Visitacion Valley/Sunnydale: 239-6100.

cases panelists hear. Vandalism: "At one hearing, a boy agreed to pay for and help fix a window he damaged," or noise: "A man who broke his leg had barking dogs. They kept his neighbors awake nights. He was so anxious to end the dispute, he attended the hearing despite the fact that he was ill," or fights: "One group of girls fought for years. Their mother finally called Community Boards. At the hear-

ing, they agreed to stop for a 'trial period' of time, but there's been no trouble since."

The most advantageous aspect of a housemeeting is that it lets neighbors come together to discuss common fears and neighborhood problems. Then they find ways to help each other confront them. People usually agree that Community Board panels provide one good way to do it.

Director's Column

By Raymond Shonholtz
Program Director

Last month, at the request of the German-Marshall Fund, I attended a conference in Bonn, Germany. The main purpose of the meeting was to develop criminal justice programs for the "guest worker" (foreign workers living in Germany) population. High ranking members of the German Ministry of Justice and the Judiciary attended. Four Americans—the Minnesota Director of Community Corrections, the New York and Paris directors of the VERA Institute (a well-respected criminal justice research organization) and myself for the Community Board Program—also were there.

Like other Western European countries, Germany has serious social and criminal justice problems with its guest worker population. The workers—from Yugoslavia, Turkey, Italy, Spain and Greece—are the backbone of Germany's economic recovery. A significant number of the worker families have lived in Germany more than 15 years. They also have raised children within the German education system. Given that nation's citizenship laws, it is impossible for the workers or their children to become German nationals, even though they are vital to the state's economic well being. The result is a large population with no political power and few social programs.

Considering Germany's wealth and advanced technology, it is upsetting that so few guest worker criminal justice or social programs exist. The state's response to problem situations is to deport guest workers to their national homelands. This extreme but common response not only causes family divisions but sends second generation guest workers to nations with which they are not familiar.

At the conference, some of the participants urged naturalization and integration of guest workers into German social life. But these policy recommendations received little attention. Instead, the meeting focused on The Bridge, an experimental work release program for juveniles in Munich. Another focus of discussion was the Community Board Program.

Points of interest in the Program were the following: diverse racial and ethnic participation, panelist training and the types of cases referred to panels. Since the guest worker population consists of several language groups, the CBP panels' ability to handle multiracial and ethnic cases impressed conference participants. They asked questions about the Pro-



gram's voluntary nature: How could the state not be involved and what value has a resolution that is not legally enforceable?

To answer their questions, I described several hearings and agreements. I used these examples to show the importance of voluntary participation for effective case resolution. It also was pointed out that any state interest in conflict resolution was best met when the most concerned parties in a problem mutually resolved it. I argued that public policy should encourage such resolutions locally without the formal intrusion of state bureaucracy.

Reviewing the day's discussions on the way home reinforced to me the importance of the CBP panels' work. It suggested that our collective effort may well have long term historical impact.

Family Problems, Family Solutions

She had spent a long, hard day cleaning rooms and making beds at a downtown hotel. As tiring as the work was, it would have been worth it to her if her son was going to school, getting an education, making something of the opportunity she was trying to provide. But he had hardly been to the ninth grade at all, and spent only the first day of his tenth grade career at school. He wanted to work, not study. The battle lines were drawn, and they had been skirmishing for the past year or two. Then in September he was busted for a minor crime committed when he should have been in school.

Across the Valley another mother grew more and more anxious as one neighbor after another told her that one of her daughters had stolen from them. She was not exactly sure what to do, so the family repaid the money and tried to discipline the daughter. But eventually one of the neighbors reported a theft and the girl spent the night at the Youth Guidance Center.

Eventually both these young people and their families ended up at Community Board panel sessions. In each case, the panel dealt with the incident that brought everyone together: the mother and son agreed he could do a school-recognized 4/4 program (four hours study, four

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**Visitacion Valley
Community Board Program
161 Leland Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94134**

Dear Community Board staff:

My wife and I appreciate very much what Rita Adrian and Ruby Williams did for us. Now we can sleep nights. More power to the Visitacion Valley Community Board Program. . . .

—A grateful resident
on Teddy St.

**Don't Fuss. Call Us.
239-6100**

Noisy neighbors? Landlord/tenant conflicts? Vandalism? Theft? Consumer hassles? If any of these problems are getting you down, call the Visitacion Valley Community Board Program. We can help you solve them. Phone or visit if you want to refer a case or get more information.

Bernal CBP Celebrates First Birthday



1978 was an action-packed year for Bernal Heights' Community Board Program. During that time, a new office opened on Cortland Ave., more than 20 panelists were trained to help resolve conflicts and three Community Board panels were established, one for each neighborhood area. Case referrals topped 100. According to one CBP staff member, "neighborhood people became more aware of the Program." More cases and hearings are expected in 1979. Panelists increasingly are involved with community outreach and training, case followup and Program development activities. Bernal panelists and staff are quite confident that in 1979, many more people will "think Community Boards."



Meet Tina Avila

There's a new face at Bernal Heights Community Boards. She's Tina Avila, the Program's new field coordinator. Tina will work with other staff—Terry Amsler, Lupe Henriquez, Teresa Kennett and Bruce Thomas—as well as CBP panelists and Bernal residents, on community outreach, case development and training.

A San Francisco Mission district resident since age one, Tina has spent much of her time in Mission group organizing efforts. Before working in Bernal, she was with the immigration unit of Legal Assistance (Mission office) and active in Latinos for Emergency Bilingual Health Services. Tina is now concentrating on getting to know Bernal Heights.

"I found out about this job several months ago, but I've been familiar with the Community Board Program for more than a year," she said. It's an organization that's really needed in Bernal Heights and should be in other parts of the City. Neighborhoods like the Mission, Potrero Hill and Portola would benefit from a Community Board Program."

Tina went to Mission High School, then to City College and San Francisco State University. At State, she earned an undergraduate degree in Latin American Area Studies and a master's degree in Women's Studies. She speaks fluent Spanish.

Growing up in the Mission, organizing neighborhood groups and helping to solve the many dilemmas of undocumented workers—known otherwise as "illegal aliens"—made Tina very much aware of the types of personal and community problems people face daily.

"A very important part of the job here is helping people work out their problems and conflicts," she noted. "But the cultural differences sometimes are great and there are often barriers to organizing groups or gaining people's trust because of these differences."

Despite her demanding job, Tina manages to find time as an organizer working for

adequate bilingual services at San Francisco General Hospital. "It's taken a year-and-a-half of my life," she says.

"Nearly two years ago, a non-English-speaking pregnant woman was sent home by the hospital. What staff there didn't realize was that she'd gone into labor. Her baby was born at home and died."

Seeing a serious need for round-the-clock bilingual services at the hospital, Tina became part of a group lobbying for more adequate medical services.

Administrative complaints were filed with the State Department of Public Health in Sacramento. Testimony presented there spurred health department officials to investigate the case. In June 1978, the hospital and City of San Francisco received a letter of noncompliance saying they had violated Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

"We're still trying to establish 24-hour bilingual services there with community control via a monitoring board," she explained.

Returning to the topic of Bernal Heights Community Boards, Tina said she expected to see more neighborhood involvement with the Program. "I didn't know quite what to expect at first, but from what I can see, we'll be getting many more cases."

Thanks for the Space!

Community Board Program staff extends its most sincere appreciation to the following organizations:

- Alemany Recreation Room
- Holly Court Recreation Room
- Precita Valley Community Center
- St. James Church
- St. Kevin's Church
- Visitacion Valley Community Center

Without their selfless assistance, many of our Bernal Heights and Visitacion Valley/Sunnydale meetings may not have taken place.

El Programa del "Community Board" ha establecido tres paneles, compuestos de residentes del area que han sido entrenados en técnicas de mediación, con el propósito de ayudar a la gente de esta comunidad a resolver sus problemas y oír sus quejas. Muchos de estos problemas pueden ser resueltos dentro de la comunidad sin necesidad de involucrar a la policía o abogados. Si quisiera informarse más a cerca de este programa por favor llame al 285-4688 o venga a nuestra oficina en la avenida Cortland número 907. Use su "Community Board!"

Bernal Heights Community Boards

Want to know more about Community Boards in Bernal Heights? If you belong to a block club, church group or if you want to hold a housemeeting for neighbors, we'd like to talk with you. We want you to phone us about neighborhood problems too! Call or visit if you want to refer a case or get more information.

**Bernal Heights
Community Boards
907 Cortland Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94110
285-4688**

We're Here To Help You.

Foundations Support CBP

The efforts of the Community Board Program are supported by private grants from: The Field Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Foremost-McKesson Foundation, the Gerbode Foundation, Hass Fund, the Hancock Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Fund, the New World Foundation, Norman Foundation, Public Welfare Foundation, Rosenberg Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation and the North Shore Unitarian Veatch Program.

Welcome New Bernal Panelists

Three bilingual panelists recently joined Bernal Heights' Community Board Program. They are: Maria Basurto, Lily Resendiz and Carmen Sanchez. The Spanish-speaking board members will serve one year. Bernal Heights neighbors and CBP staff extend to them a warm welcome.

Sorry About That:

Editorial and typographical oversights did it. Ruth Fawcett Nomura noticed it. Ruth's middle-name is not Faurett. It's Fawcett. CBP News humbly stands corrected.

Carmen Sanchez: Panelista Bilingüe

"Hay muchas problemas en la comunidad latina que necesitan ser resueltos, el Community Boards nos puede ayudar a resolverlos en una forma positiva, evitando el miedo y la vergüenza que a veces el sistema de las cortes infunde," dice Carmen Sanchez una de nuestras panelistas bilingües.

Carmen es maestra asistente del colegio Paul Revere y lleva viviendo mas de doce años en Bernal Heights. Persona muy activa en su comunidad decidió participar como panelista del Community Boards para poder ayudar y llegar a conocer mejor a sus vecinos. Ella piensa que los vecinos, si uno los llega a tratar pueden ser la extensión de su familia.

Le preguntamos a Carmen como el Community Boards y la comunidad latina se podrían ayudar mutuamente, "los latinos tomaran interés en participar con el Community Boards, una vez que tengan la suficiente confianza en el programa, y se den cuenta que este tipo de programa no discrimina a individuos por su raza y mientras más latinos participen con el Board, más la comunidad latina podrá ayudar al programa."

Siendo de origen mejicano, la senora Sanchez admira y se siente orgullosa de su estirpe, pero piensa que los latinos deberían involucrarse aún más en su comunidad, pues según ella es la única manera de resolver conflictos con éxito.

Carmen ya ha oído varios casos en Bernal Heights, en los cuales familias latinas han estado envueltas y se puede decir que gracias a su colaboración las problemas fueron entendidos y resueltos ya que Carmen sirvió de intérprete pues domina tanto el inglés como el español. "Los panelistas del Community Boards, no tienen prejuicios, de manera que pueden respetar los principios morales, creencias y cultura de otros, pienso que el entrenamiento que como panelistas hemos recibido nos ha ayudado en este aspecto." Carmen opina que el entrenamiento que recibió para llegar a ser panelista la ha ayudado mucho en su vida personal y en su vida social pues según ella ha aprendido a oír el mensaje de las palabras y no las palabras solas y a darle la oportunidad a individuos a hablar y expresar sentimientos sin interrupción, y también ha adquirido mas objetividad. "Me doy cuenta que siempre una historia tiene dos lados."

Interesados en saber le preguntamos a Carmen si conocía sus vecinos, ella nos dijo que no mucho, que en verdad quisiera llegarlos a conocer mejor, pero que algunas veces detectaba cierta aprensión por parte de sus vecinos en ser mas abiertos y establecer una amistad, pero que con el tiempo y su experiencia en el programa estaba segura de poder establecerla.

Por último le preguntamos a Carmen, que mensaje tendría para la comunidad latina y nos dijo, "Yo recomiendo el Community Boards por



muchas razones, y una de ellas es porque es una manera más humana de resolver conflictos y todo el mundo lo puede usar pues son servicios gratuitos que se ofrecen a la comunidad. Quien usa este proceso, también puede participar en él,".....

Don't Suffer In Silence

(From P. 1)

physical evidence and there was none. Finally, I called the Community Board."

Bernal Heights staff visited the tenant and persuaded him to attend a hearing. When he agreed, the woman was relieved. According to her account, the situation "was reaching a point where someone would have been hurt."

"This thing couldn't have been solved conventionally," she noted. "The man wouldn't listen to anyone—not even Community Board staff when they first visited him."

At the hearing, she said, there was strong support from the panelists and neighborhood. The panel also was objective with him. The tenant finally agreed to leave if his last month's rent was returned. "I gave him the money and that ended the problem."

Broken Windows

Vandalism is a common problem for any City neighborhood. In Visitacion Valley, one Hahn St. resident's home was vandalized, leaving a window and a door broken.

"I didn't look for Community Boards, they phoned me," she said. One neighbor saw the boy as he broke in and phoned police. They, in turn, phoned the Visitacion Valley CBP office.

Staff asked the woman if she was willing to bring the case to a neighborhood hearing.

"We had a hearing — primarily for me to get acquainted with the boy and his mother," she explained. "I wanted to know why he broke into my house and how he could be made to realize that what he did was wrong. I didn't want him to get arrested."

He agreed to pay \$31 for the damage and helped her nephew repair the window.

Consumer Gripe

Even irate consumers from Bernal and the Valley phone the Community Boards. One frustrated car owner, after nearly three years of phoning an unresponsive automobile dealer and several consumer agencies, finally was referred to the Bernal CBP by the district attorney's consumer fraud division.

"I bought a car, paid \$3,200 for it and dozens of little things went wrong," she said. The dealer fixed everything, except the speedometer cable. She tried in vain to make them repair it. No luck. Finally, more than two years later, her social worker explained that it was against the law to drive without a speedometer cable. The dealer was to blame for not replacing it.

"Community Board staff discussed the matter directly with the company manager and not with its hot-shot salesman," she noted. The manager readily agreed to install a new speedometer cable.

"I found that if I'd talked to the boss in the first place, I wouldn't have had all this trouble."

Valley CBP

Family Cases

(From P. 2)

hours work) and the young girl and her family saw that the stolen property was returned. But the real focus of the sessions was on the underlying problems within the family — clashes of values, discipline problems, the breakdown of communications. As part of the resolution in both cases, the panelists encouraged the families to seek family counseling as a way of working on some of the more basic, long-term problems.

What has become clear to the staff and panelists in many recent cases is that long before there was a dispute between someone in the family and a neighbor or between the and the school, there was an ongoing dispute within the family or school. Judging from what happened in the cases mentioned above, if the panels had heard these problems at an earlier stage, the initial "criminal" incident might not have occurred.

People in the neighborhood also are beginning to realize that the panels are a possible resource for family disputes. Recently a woman who was having problems with a teenage son asked the panel to hear her case. They had been fighting for some months about money. He is large and when he became angry, she felt threatened. With the panel's help they were able to work out a way to solve their differences in the future. Clearly, the panels have a role to play in family disputes.

Season's Greetings!

Community Board
Program staff
extends to you
wishes for
Good Holidays
and a Happy
New Year!!

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